

and sympathetic! Mademoiselle Colonna laughed off the accident with impatient indifference; Major Vaughan bowed over his hostess's fair hand; and all took their places at table.

"A budget, as usual, for Colonna," said Lord Castletowers, sorting the pile of letters just tumbled out of the bag. "One, two three billets, redolent of what might be called the parfum du boudoir, for Vaughan—also, as usual! Two letters, my dearest mother, for you; and only one (a square-shouldered, round-listed blue-complexioned, obstinate-looking, business document) for myself. A pretty thing to lie at the bottom of one's letter-bag, like hope at the bottom of Pandora's casket!"

"It hath a Bond-street aspect, Castletowers, that affects me unpleasantly," said Major Vaughan, from whose brow the angry flush with which he had received his three letters and swept them carelessly on one side, had not yet quite faded.

"Say, rather, a Chancery-lane aspect," replied the young Earl, breaking the seal as he spoke; "and that's as much worse than Bond-street as Newgate is worse than the Queen's Bench."

"Bond-street and Chancery Lane, Newgate and the Queen's Bench!" repeated Mademoiselle Colonna. "The conversation sounds very awful. What does it all mean?"

"I presume," said Lady Castletowers, "that Major Vaughan supposed the letter to be written by a— a tailor, or some person of that description; while it really comes from my son's lawyer, Mr. Trefalden."

"I met Mr. Trefalden a few weeks ago," said Mademoiselle Colonna, "in Switzerland."

"In Switzerland?" echoed Lord Castletowers.

"And he authorized me to add his name to our general committee list."

"A miracle! a miracle!"

"And why a miracle?" asked Lady Castletowers. "Does Mr. Trefalden disapprove the Italian cause?"

"Mr. Trefalden, my dear mother, never approves or disapproves of any public movement whatever. Nature seems to have created him without opinions."

"Then he is either a very superficial, or a very ambitious man," said Lady Castletowers.

"The latter, depend on it. He's a remarkably clever fellow, and has good interest, no doubt. He will set his politics to the tune of his interest some day, and make his way to the woollack 'in a galliard.'"

"I am glad this is but a conjecture," estimated of Mr. Trefalden's character," said Olympia.

"You like him, then?" said Major Vaughan, hastily.

"I neither like him nor dislike him; but if these were proven facts, I would never speak to him again."

Signor Colonna came in and made his morning salutations, his eyes wandering eagerly towards his letters all the time.

"Good morning—good morning. Late, did you say? Peccavi! So I am. I lost myself in the library. Bell! I heard no bell. Pray forgive me, dear Lady Castletowers. Any news to-day? You were early this morning, Major Vaughan. Saw you in the saddle soon after six. Plenty of letters this morning, I see—plenty of letters!"

And with this he slipped into his seat, and became at once immersed in the contents of the documents before him.

"Trefalden writes from town, mother," said Lord Castletowers. "He excuses his delay on the plea of much business. He has been settling his cousin's affairs—the said cousin having come in for between four and five millions sterling."

"A man who comes in for four or five millions sterling has no right to live," said Major Vaughan. "His very being is an insult to his offended species."

"But if this cousin should prove to be a lady?" suggested Mademoiselle Colonna.

"I would condemn her, of course—to matrimony."

"I should think Trefalden would take care of that!" laughed the Earl.

"But is the cousin a lady?" asked Lady Castletowers, with seeming indifference.

"Alas! no, my dear mother, too surely he belongs to the genus homo. Trefalden's words are—I have been assisting my cousin in the ar-

rangement of his affairs, he having lately inherited a fortune of between four and five millions sterling."

"I have no doubt that he is fat, ugly, and disagreeable," said Major Vaughan.

"And plebeian," added Lady Castletowers, with a smile.

"And illiberal," said Olympia.

"And, in short, so rich," said the Earl, "that were he hideous and ignorant as Caliban, society would receive him with open arms, and the beauty of the season would gladly wear orange-blossoms for him at St. George's! What says this honourable company—shall I invite him down to Castletowers for a week or two, and shall we all fall to worshipping the golden calf?"

"Not for the world!" exclaimed Olympia, scornfully; but she was the only one who replied.

The breakfast-party then broke up. The Earl went to his stables, Olympia to her apartments, and Major Vaughan to the billiard-room. Signor Colonna and Lady Castletowers strolled to and fro in the sunshine, outside the breakfast-room windows.

"But who is this millionaire?" asked the Italian, eagerly.

"Caro amico, you know as much as I know," replied Lady Castletowers. "He is a cousin of our solicitor, Mr. Trefalden, who is a very well-bred gentlemanly person. As for this fortune, I think I have heard that it has been accumulating for one or two centuries—but that is probably a mere rumour."

"Between four and five millions!" ejaculated Colonna. "With such a fortune, what might not be done by a friend to the cause!"

Lady Castletowers smiled.

"Sempre Italia!" she said.

"Sempre Italia," replied he, lifting his hat reverently as he pronounced the words. "While I live, Lady Castletowers. While I live."

They had come now to the end of the path, and were about to return, when he laid his hand on hers, and said, very earnestly:

"I wish I could see this man. I wish I knew him. I have won over thousands of recruits in my time, Alethea—thousands, who had only their blood to give, and gave it. Money is as precious as blood in a cause like ours. If we had but one million, eighteen months ago, Italy would now have been free."

"Ah, you want me to help you—you want Gervase to bring him here? Is that so?"

"Precisely."

"Well, I suppose it can be done—somehow."

"I think it can," replied Colonna. "I am sure it can."

"And it might lead to great results?"

"It might—indeed it might."

"Your personal influence, I know, is almost magical," mused Lady Castletowers; "and if our millionaire should prove to be young and impressionable—"

She hesitated. He looked up, and their eyes met.

"Olympia is very lovely," she said, smiling; "and very fascinating."

"I have thought of that," he replied. "I have thought of that; and Olympia would never marry any man who did not devote himself to Italy, body and soul!"

"And purse," added Lady Castletowers, quietly.

"And purse—of course," said he, with a somewhat heightened colour.

"Then I will do what I can, dear old friend, for your sake," said Lady Castletowers, affectionately.

"And I," he replied "will do what I can, for the sake of the cause. God knows, Alethea, that I do it for the cause alone—God knows how pure my soul is of any other aim or end!"

"I am sure of it," she replied, abstractedly.

"Had I but the half of four or five millions at command, the stake upon which I have set my whole life, and my child's life, would be won. Do you hear me, Alethea? would be, must be won!"

"And shall be won, amico, if any help of mine can avail you," said Lady Castletowers. "I will speak to Gervase about it at once. He shall ask both the cousins down."

"Best friend," murmured the Italian, taking the

hand which she extended to him, and pressing it gratefully in both his own.

"But beware!—not a word to him of all this. He has his English notions of hospitality—you understand?"

"Yes—it is true."

"Adieu, then, till luncheon."

"Addio."

And the Countess, with a look of unusual pre-occupation on her fair brow, went slowly back to the house, thinking of many things:—chiefly of how her son should some day marry an heiress, and how Olympia Colonna should be disposed of to Saxon Trefalden.

CHAPTER XV. SAXON DRAWS HIS FIRST CHEQUE.

A tall young man stood at the first floor window of a fashionable hotel in Piccadilly, drumming upon the plate-glass panes, and staring listlessly down upon the crowded street below. It was about two o'clock in the day, and the brilliant thoroughfare was all alive with colour and sunshine; but his face took no joyousness from the busy scene. It wore, on the contrary, as gloomy and discontented an expression as such a bright face could well patron. The ceaseless ebb and flow of gorgeous equipages; the fair pedestrians in their fashionable toilettes, even the little band of household troops riding by in helm and cuirass, failed apparently to interest that weary spectator. He yawned, looked at his watch, took an impatient turn or two about the room, and then went back to the window, and drummed again upon the panes. Some books, an opera-glass and one or two newspapers, lay on the table; but the leaves of the books were uncut, and only one of the newspapers had been unfolded. Too ennuyé to read, and too restless to sit still, this young man evidently found his time hang heavily upon his hands.

Presently a cab drove up to the hotel, and two gentlemen jumped out. The first of these was William Trefalden; the second Lord Castletowers. William Trefalden looked up and nodded, as he came up to the broad stone steps, and the watcher at the window ran joyously to meet him on the stairs.

"I'm so glad you're come!" was his eager exclamation. "I've been watching for you, and the time has seemed so long!"

"I am only twenty minutes late," replied Mr. Trefalden, smiling.

"But it's so dreary here!"

"And I bring you a visitor," continued the other. "Lord Castletowers, allow me to present my cousin, Mr. Saxon Trefalden. Saxon, Lord Castletowers is so kind as to desire your acquaintance."

Saxon put out his hand, and gave the Earl's a hearty shake. He would as soon have thought of greeting his guest with a bow as flinging him over the balcony into the street below.

"Thank you," said he. "I'm very much obliged to you."

"I am surprised that you find this situation 'dreary,' Mr. Trefalden," said Lord Castletowers, with a glance towards the window.

"I find all London dreary," replied Saxon, bluntly.

"May I ask how long you have been here?"

"Five days."

"Then you have really had no time to form an opinion."

"I have had time to be very miserable," said Saxon. "I never was so miserable in my life. The noise and hurry of London bewilder me. I can settle to nothing. I can think of nothing. I can do nothing. I find it impossible to read; and if I go out alone in the streets, I lose myself. Then there seems to be no air. I have inhaled smoke and dust; but I have not *breathed* since I came into the place."

"Your first impressions of our Babel are certainly not couleur de rose," said the Earl, laughingly.

"They are couleur de Lothbury, and couleur de Chancery-lane," interposed William Trefalden. "My cousin, Lord Castletowers, has for these last four days been the victim of the law. We have been putting him in possession of his property, and he has seen nothing of town save the gold regions east of Temple Bar."

"An excellent beginning," said the Earl,